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Nucleus 20 °

THE FAMILY ACCORDING TO THE HEART OF DON BOSCO

Gabriela Patiño O.

Continuing our reflections on the family, in this 20th Nucleus, it is my wish that together we turn our gaze to Don Bosco to find in his heart and in his actions some very important and rich ideas about the family. This time it is Father Gaetano Zito, diocesan priest of Catania, an admirer of Don Bosco and therefore with a Salesian heart, who offers us his reflection. His speech was held on May 17, 2015, at the annual Past Pupils Conference of the Sicilian Federation of Catania.

We thank Don Gaetano for his words and we are ready to listen to them and read them carefully in order to take from them the elements that will help us in our formation as FMA Past Pupils.

Here is what Don Gaetano expresses:

I would like to begin this Don Bosco reflection on the family with a parable: it tells of a father who, tired of the insistent questions of his youngest son, decides to give the boy a difficult puzzle to solve, consisting of putting together all the pieces of a world map. After a short time, the child returns with the work finished. His father is surprised, and he says: «Dad, it was simple. Behind the pieces of the map, I discovered that the figure of a man was being formed. **Thus, by putting the man together, I put the world together**». A story to signify the importance of the harmonious development of the human person so that the world, in turn, can be organized in a balanced way, where the family and society become a place of growth for all.

Along this line of the story, ... we members of the Salesian Family and in particular you, dear Past Pupils, are called. Following the message of Pope Francis for the WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY, "**Communicating the Family: A Privileged Place of Encounter with the Gift of Love.**" After all, the *family is the first place where we learn to communicate*. Returning to this original moment can help us to make both communication more authentic and human, and to look at the family from a new point of view."

As regards the theme on the family, in Don Bosco's writings we do not find a theoretical discourse on the family, but a continuous reference to the fundamental mission of the family. Deepening the "Memoirs of the Oratory" and guided by the study carried out by Fr Aldo Giraud, sdb, we can affirm that Don Bosco had **a realistic vision** of family life. According to Giraud, Don Bosco's vision "reflects concrete life situations in a variety of facets: present parents and absent parents, those who are exemplary and those who are negative and then there are many children without

families, abandoned, orphans or far from home, of whom Don Bosco becomes the father, for whom and with whom he creates a replacement family in Valdocco. ”

Don Bosco had lost his father as a child and at home he had had disagreements because of the hostility of his half-brother Antonio. He was so marked by this experience that, when he thought of founding an educational work for his children, he wanted no other name than a '**home**'. Aware of the importance of the family for the healthy growth of children, Don Bosco decides to reproduce their style in the welcoming environments of young people. He will call a **family spirit** the atmosphere that reigns in his homes, characterized by attention to the young person, to his attitudes, to the values he bears, making the strings of the heart vibrate with delicacy, loving kindness, charity, avoiding any form of repression and violence. He created an environment where harmony is experienced between spontaneity and discipline, familiarity and respect for the rules, joy and commitment, freedom and duty. In this environment, young people are in the best conditions to develop their relational, expressive and creative skills, the spirit of solidarity in caring for one another.

Therefore, Don Bosco's personal family experience was decisive in creating **this family spirit**. In this light we must interpret Don Bosco's family experience and **the role of the mother**, which appear as one of the central threads of the Oratory's Memoirs. In that context of agricultural crisis and terrible famine in family management, we highlight the role and virtues of the ideal mother: resourcefulness; trust in Providence ("My husband [...] in dying told me to have confidence in God. Come therefore, let us kneel and pray"); the ability to make decisions and take risks ("In extreme cases, extreme means must be used"); sacrifice and intelligent dedication ("with tireless work, with a constant economy, with speculation in the smallest things, and with some truly providential help that crisis could be overcome"); the exclusive and generous consecration to children with total self-forgetfulness ("I will never abandon them, even when you want to give me all the gold in the world"); carrying out the educational mission with "utmost care", his pedagogical methodology (Giraud, family model in Don Bosco's vision and experience).

This shows us that for Don Bosco **the function of the family is crucial**: parents are, for better or for worse, the protagonists of the pedagogical process, the success or failure of education depends on their commitment and example; the style of the educational relationship depends on their capacity for closeness, for reasonable and loving dialogue, for attention to detail and on the intelligent enhancement of the moments and rhythms of ongoing educational dialogue.

WORKSHEET FOR THE CONFEDERAL, FEDERATION, UNION COUNCILS AND FOR ALL PAST PUPILS OF THE WORLD.

Read carefully the text offered to us by Don Gaetano.

Identify three strong ideas present in the text.

Formulate, based on the content, a good practice to be carried out in your family context.

Please send your personal or group response by e-mail to delegatamondialeexallieve@gmail.com or by regular mail to the address:
Via dell'Ateneo Salesiano, 81 - 00139 Rome RM

Pray together:

A Mother's Prayer to Mary

Mother of Jesus and my Mother, Mary
turn Your gaze of Mercy and Love on me
that I feel for motherhood today more than ever
all the sweet and heavy responsibility.

To you, O Mother, I entrust my children (my daughter/my son) whom I love so much,
for whom I have suffered much and for whom I will have to account to Your Divine Son.

Teach me to guide them (her/him) as you guided Your Son Jesus.
With a sure hand that leads to God
make me tender without weakness and strong without harshness,
grant me that patience that never tires
and endures everything because it has only one goal
"The Eternal Salvation of my child/children".

Accompany me in this arduous undertaking o Immaculate Holy Virgin.
Shape my heart in the image of Your Heart
let my children see in me the reflection of Your Virtues
and, after learning from me to love and serve you
in this land, may they come one day to praise you
and bless you in Heaven.
Amen.